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Calls for Courses on Communism Being Pressed on Public Schools

Survey Shows Methods in 34 States Range From Full Local Option to Mandatory Use of Study Guides

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By Robert A. Taft, Jr.
The recent studies by the American Bar Association have been urging the public schools to include specific courses on Communism in their curriculum.

Early in the year the American Bar Association passed a resolution urging such teaching and demanding "the highest quality of instruction in this area."

This month it was disclosed that the American Legion was working with the National Education Association to provide "a model course" for the public schools to study about communism.

The New York Times has asked the education departments in all fifty states whether they now prescribe, or plan to issue, separate materials on communism for use in the social studies curriculum. Replies have been received from thirty-four states.

The states' approach to this controversial subject varies greatly. It ranges from complete local option to determine whether and how an understanding of communism should be taught, to mandated study guides.

Broad Range Revealed

It also runs the gamut from apparently well-documented scholarly teaching to at least one example of an ultra-right-wing approach.

The latter includes, as a required part of such instruction, the showing of a film strip, developed at Harding College, in Arkansas, and widely attacked in recent months as containing extreme right-wing propaganda.

Thus the range of the approach is from an objective investigation of the conflict between communism and the ideas of freedom to the interpretation of social welfare measures as part of the threat of communism. However, the latter approach seems in the minority.

Broadly, the replies fall into three categories:

1. States that permit local districts to determine their own curriculum almost without interference.
 2. States that have prepared, or are preparing, separate curriculum materials on communism.
 3. States that prescribe teaching about communism as an integral part of their social studies curriculum.
- Of the first category of local option is Maryland. Dr. Thomas G. Pullen Jr., state su-

perintendent of education in that State, said in his report to the State Board of Education.

The department recommends a thirty-seven-page publication, "Unit on Communism—Essays of Democracy," by the National Public Schools.

Among the category of states that have introduced or are planning to introduce special materials Louisiana has perhaps led with the greatest enthusiasm. However, its interpretation of the mission leans heavily toward right-wing indoctrination.

A mimeographed publication, "Americanism versus Communism: A Unit of Work in American History," was issued this year by Shelby M. Jackson, state superintendent of education. On its cover it pictured Uncle Sam standing apparently helpless while a Red Army soldier grabs the globe.

The booklet is intended for high-school history teachers. Its introduction states that "there can be no compromise—no peaceful coexistence with international communism."

In its approach to economic theory it is equally uncompromising.

It urges "a determination to resist all movements toward collectivism or subversive socialism ('welfare state')."

It calls socialism and the welfare state way stations on the road to communism.

Among visual materials recommended for the mandatory course is the film strip, "Communism on the Map." This film implies that the United States, Spain and Switzerland are the only non-Communist nations of the Western world.

According to a resolution of the State Legislature, the film must be seen by all high-school students as a requirement for graduation, as part of a mandatory six-week unit.

This year, the Florida Legislature approved a bill requiring all public high schools to teach a course on "Americanism vs. Communism" of not less than thirty hours. This is required of all students. The course must begin not later than September, 1962. At present, the State Department of Education is studying materials for this course.

Oregon Planning A Course
The Oregon Department of Education is preparing a course on the nature of Communism. This will be used in addition to an existing twelfth-grade course.

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independent of education, point out that each of the twenty-four school systems write its own syllabus and reference materials.

But Dr. Pullen adds that, while there are outspoken current demands to include instruction about communism in the curriculum, "a few years ago many schools were forbidden to even mention communism in the classroom."

Discussion Prohibited

These directives, he says, "were not to forbid advocacy of communism, but to prohibit any discussion about communism."

The Department of Public Instruction for Pennsylvania mandates only three units in the social studies—Pennsylvania history, United States history and World Culture.

While the teaching about communism is left to local option, the department offers a curriculum pamphlet on "A Comparative Study of Democracy and Communism" and a detailed "annotated bibliography" on world communism. The latter includes a carefully selected appendix on Communist source materials.

Connecticut's State Department of Education "does not have separate materials on communism for either teachers or students, nor do we plan to prepare any such materials."

While there is local option, the curriculum bulletin recommends courses in European and Asian civilizations, both of which have "a substantial unit on communism." So do senior courses and seminars dealing with problems in democracy.

Complete local option in all curriculum matters, and therefore lack of any state materials on communism, were reported by Wisconsin, Wyoming, Maine, Oklahoma, Nevada, Alaska, and Ohio.

Texas leaves the preparation of materials to local schools. However, the State Association of School Superintendents has been working with local school superintendents "to assist them in developing their own programs of good Americanism."

The Department of Public Instruction in Michigan replied that the only areas in which state standards determine the local curriculum are physical education, civics, driver education and the teaching of the effects of alcohol and narcotics.

Massachusetts operates under the system of local option. For the last nine years, however, a special Division of Civic Education has provided instruction concerning communism to undergraduates in teacher-training

cal-Economic Systems Offers the Greatest Opportunities for the Advancement of Human Rights.

While California has no officially approved or prescribed course, officials point to a special bulletin issued last March by the Los Angeles schools which titled instruction "About Communism." It outlines instruction for the junior high and high schools, and includes an extensive reference list of reading materials and films.

Among the states that report that they are planning to issue special bulletins or instructional materials on communism are Tennessee, Idaho, New Hampshire, Indiana, and Mississippi.

New York is in the third category—that of states reporting that they deal with the problem as part of their social science program. The "Communist way of life" is presented in the world history and geography sequence recommended for ninth and tenth grade.

The fourth semester of a recommended two-year course in American history offers an analysis of the conflicting ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Advisory Group Set Up

This year, the department also has set up an advisory committee to provide a new brochure on "communism and its dangers" for use by teachers.

"Such an approach, rather than the superimposing of a separate and isolated course on communism—which would of necessity duplicate content now taught in American history, world history, and world geography, appears to be soundest," says Dr. James E. Allen Jr., the state commissioner.

Other states that treat problems of communism as part of the regular social studies curriculum are:

Colorado, Nebraska, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, New Mexico, South Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Utah and Iowa.

The Iowa supervisor of curriculum pointed out that current social-studies guides, prepared by the state's Department of Public Instruction, are about ten years old.

"At the time those materials were developed," he noted, "very little information was provided regarding communism."

Revisions are now scheduled.

Utah reports that it plans to issue a new unit comparing communism and democracy. This will be for the twelfth-grade course in contemporary social and economic problems.

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